

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Belmont Town Hall, Conference Room 1
Thursday Evening, March 2, 2006, 6:30 p.m.**

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. All the members of the Committee were present at the meeting except John Conte. Also present at the call to order were Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee, and Thomas Younger, Town Administrator. Various other Town employees (identified below) participated in the meeting when their capital budget requests were discussed.

In addition to the original department requests for fiscal 2007 capital expenditures and a chart, prepared by Mrs. Hagg, summarizing those requests, the Committee had the following material before it:

1. Letter dated 2/24/06 from Nava Niv Vogel to the Capital Budget Committee.
2. Letter dated 2/20/06 from Assistant Chief Lane regarding the Police requests.
3. Letter dated 2/28/06 from Glenn Clancy regarding various CD projects.
4. Letter dated 2/24/06 from Kevin Looney regarding Building Department requests.
5. Pictures of the police station taken 2/23/06 in various spaces.
6. Agenda for this meeting of 3/2/06 (with draft of 2/16/06 meeting minutes).
7. Copy of letter from CBC to WC dated 3/1/06.

Other items, noted below, were distributed in the course of the meeting.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meeting
(Item 2 on Committee Agenda)
Meeting of 2/16/06

Ms. Fallon noted that the draft minutes as presented seemed to indicate that a guarantee had been given that the new HVAC units at the high school could be used for a renovated high school. She pointed out that it was the hope of those who were specifying the new HVAC units that they could be used in a renovated high school, but no guarantees could be given at this time. She asked that the draft minutes be revised so that the final minutes would more clearly reflect that fact. Otherwise, the draft minutes of the meeting of 3/2/06 were accepted as presented.

General Discussion
(Item 3 on Committee Agenda)

Mrs. Brusch reported on the Warrant Committee meeting of the previous evening at which the Warrant Committee had received Mrs. Brusch's report from the Capital Budget Committee concerning the currently proposed Capital Budget for fiscal year 2007. The Chairman of the Warrant Committee had immediately concluded that insufficient funds were being provided for the Capital Budget. Mrs. Brusch had read the relevant Town by-law to the Warrant Committee, causing one of its members to withdraw his objection to the transfer of Police cruisers from the Capital Budget to the Operating Budget. On behalf of the Capital Budget Committee, Mrs. Brusch had made to

the Warrant Committee the points that items cannot be aggregated to reach a threshold Capital Budget definition, the current \$10,000 threshold is too low, and maintenance items and routine items should not be included in the Capital Budget.

Mr. Firenze suggested that inappropriate requests to the Capital Budget Committee should be sent back to the various town departments. Mr. Younger suggested that three categories be prepared: operating requests, small capital requests and capital requests that fit the by-law definition. He noted that there are many items that would probably fall into the middle category (maintenance of smaller capital items) that may have to be addressed in the coming year. Mr. Clark suggested that the importance of having stable definitions for the Operating Budget and the Capital Budget is to make possible comparison between years to make sure that the proper amount is being spent on major capital improvements. Discussion continued concerning the concept of a capital item and it was noted that there is a correlation between the authority for municipal borrowing and the appropriateness of depreciating an asset.

Council on Aging
(Item 4 on Committee Agenda)

The Council on Aging was represented by Nava Niv Vogel, Director of the Council on Aging. She pointed out that the Council has applied for a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation for a new vehicle for the Council on Aging. If the Council is awarded such a grant, the grant will not in fact be paid until the fall. The request made by the Council to the Capital Budget Committee for a “medi-car” is a back-up in case such a grant is not awarded to the Council. The current medi-car that would be replaced is a Crown Victoria from Ford, and a similar vehicle was the preference of the person who was transportation coordinator for the Council at the time that the request was originally made. The current transportation coordinator would prefer a Toyota Camry, which would have better fuel efficiency.

Mrs. Bruschi pointed out that the Committee needed for planning purposes a five-year projection from each department concerning capital items. Mrs. Niv Vogel indicated that she would supply one but the only item she could now think of as being on that projection would be a new “BelderBus”. The current BelderBus has about 38,000 miles on it.

There was a discussion of the possibility of gaining revenue for the Town by providing space for advertisements on municipal vehicles, including the BelderBus. The discussion included the origin of the current BelderBus and an undertaking by the Town Administrator to do some further research on towns making space available for advertising on municipal vehicles.

Office of Community Development
(Item 5 on Committee Agenda)

Glen R. Clancy, P.E., Director of the Office of Community Development, represented the Office. He had been a principal participant in the joint meetings that

members of the Committee had attended previously and much of the discussion at this meeting relied on discussions at those meetings. The Committee was eager to know what Mr. Clancy would do if the proposed override failed to receive voter approval. In particular, the Committee wished to know what priorities should be given to the road requests that are not “pavement management” (using the narrow definition of pavement management). For fiscal 2007 these requests are the Trapelo/Belmont Street planning request and the so-called non-participating items in the Pleasant Street project. After a lengthy discussion of issues raised by these projects (described below), it became apparent that Mr. Clancy considers these two requests as being of the first priority even in a context of inadequate funding.

With regard to Trapelo Road, Mr. Clancy pointed out that the Belmont Street/Trapelo Road corridor project is of very high priority in the Town and cannot be advanced without doing some planning. When the project is sufficiently detailed, there is some hope that outside funding will become available for the project, itself. Currently, the Office of Community Development has just enough money on hand to do a field survey but insufficient funding for a complete plan. No progress can be made on the project without further planning.

As for the non-participating elements of the Pleasant Street project, Mr. Clancy pointed out that the project had been delayed while a solution had been worked out concerning guardrails. The State would put in steel guardrails but the Historic District Commission had insisted that wooden guardrails be used in an effort to blend into the Historic District. As far as the storm water control on private property is concerned, the policy of the Town regarding storm water that originates on the road system was reviewed. Although the Town policy regarding storm water that originates on public roads has seemed uncertain in recent years, Mr. Clark remarked that from an historical perspective the recent resistance of the Town to spend public funds regarding such a problem is an anomaly. He cited a previous incident in which the Town Meeting had insisted on funding such a project on private property despite the adverse recommendation of the Capital Budget Committee. Mr. Clancy indicated that he felt that storm water originating on flooded roads should be the Town’s responsibility. In this case (Pleasant Street) the State engineers had concluded that a storm water problem would be unlikely but the Town’s consultant thinks that there is a risk of overflow on private property during an extreme storm event. If that were to happen, water would enter privately owned buildings. Mr. Clancy would prefer not to take that risk and now is the time to address the risk while the roadway is being planned and rebuilt.

Mrs. Bruschi raised with Mr. Clancy the issue of funds that had been allocated to the Office for capital projects that were unspent, particularly with regard to projects that have been completed or should have been completed by now. She kept notes of Mr. Clancy’s comments. Mr. Firenze emphasized the importance of spending funds that have already been allocated to the Office, particularly those for pavement management, before asking the voters to make more funds available.

There ensued a general discussion of funding of road projects, particularly improvements such as curbs and sidewalks that might be viewed as collateral to the

principal issue of the roadway. The discussion also included the importance of and the difficulty of coordinating pavement management with other activities, such as renewal of water mains, that might take place in the same right of way. Ms. Fallon suggested that more management oversight is needed to coordinate projects and that the situation might be improved if the Town were to adopt a two-year cycle for the Capital Budget. Mr. Firenze suggested that homeowners might be given an option to pay for improvements like curbing and the Town should not automatically undertake this expense. Mr. Clark objected that uniformity in a road project is important and uniformity could not be achieved if each homeowner is given an option whether to have a curb or not.

Discussion turned next to the incinerator site project. The amount available in the NESWC fund is closer to \$3.9 million than to the \$3.7 million previously reported. In addition, there is a possibility that the Town will be paid for taking fill rather than having to buy fill to accomplish the "capping" that is being required. A special article will have to be prepared for a Special Town Meeting (at the time of the Annual Town Meeting) in order to make sure that the funds received from NESWC are transferred into a special purpose stabilization fund for the "capping" project. This project has been delayed while the state Department of Environmental Protection has been short staffed but the project will not be forgotten and the Town will be required to complete it. Mr. Clancy is prepared to begin by the spring of 2007. Mr. Firenze asked whether so-called "brownfield" funding (also known as "21 E funding") would be available for this project. Mr. Clancy replied that currently the Town is concentrating on the state's land fill regulations but will ask our consulting engineers to research the availability of funds under the 21 E regulations.

Police Department/Emergency Dispatch
(Item 6 on Committee Agenda)

Chief Andrew E. O'Malley, Jr. and Lt. Christopher Donahue represented the Police Department. The interview began with informal discussion of Chief O'Malley's recent announcement that he would retire as of May first. During the discussion, members of the Committee expressed good wishes for the Chief's retirement, thanked him for his service to the Town but expressed disappointment that the Town would have to do without his services.

Mrs. Brusch next raised the issue of funds previously appropriated for capital projects that remain unspent. She kept notes concerning Chief O'Malley's answers regarding specific appropriations that she raised. Chief O'Malley also assured her that the Department's five-year plan had been submitted. Mrs. Brusch informed the Chief that police cruiser requests would be dealt within the Operating Budget.

Mr. Firenze asked whether the Chief was convinced that the proposed E911 expenditure would be absolutely necessary. The Chief, in his response, made several points. The necessity for prompt action is as a result of the fact that the vendor of the current system has announced that it will no longer (after June 30, 2006) support the current system. The Department suggests an upgrade, not a total replacement. When the Department refers to a "console" it is not referring to the furniture, itself; rather

“everything that electricity goes through” will be replaced. The quotation upon which the Department’s request is premised came from Cyber Communications, a subsidiary of Motorola. The upgrade which is being requested will provide a life of seven years. (The original vendor was Motorola. The current equipment has been in place since 1995. A replacement would cost \$135,000. The upgrade will cost \$95,000, not the \$92,000 indicated in the original request.)

Lt. Donahue emphasized that the speed trailer is an important tool in responding to public requests and that traffic, particularly vehicle speed, is a very active issue among townspeople. The current speed trailer has been refurbished twice and is not worth refurbishing again but it would be used along with a new one until the old one no longer is usable. The Committee noted that the current trailer had been acquired with grant money after an earlier Committee had declined to recommend this expenditure of Town funds.

When discussing the prisoner transport vehicle, the Chief and Lt. Donahue, in response to a question concerning how frequently the current vehicle is used, not only responded that it is used frequently to transport prisoners to court but also pointed out the symbolic worth of the vehicle. They used as an example, rowdy evening parties. Participants are aware that regulations prevent police from putting more than one arrestee into a cruiser at a time. Thus, if police show up with only two cruisers, it is evident that the police are restricted to making only two arrests whereas if the police show up at a party with a prisoner transport vehicle, it is obvious that the police are in a position to make many arrests. Thus, the very presence of a prisoner transport vehicle has a calming effect on any disturbance. The current vehicle is not only used for prisoner transport (allowing multiple arrests, avoiding the need to use multiple vehicles, separating male and female prisoners, and adult and juvenile prisoners), it is also used to transport equipment to the firing range. The current vehicle was obtained as a cast-off from the Boston Police Department, has been used for 15 years and is not going to last any longer. Neither grant funding nor usable cast-off vehicles are currently available. The Department has continued to look for possible funding for this acquisition.

The Chief provided the Committee with a spreadsheet showing the repair costs over time for the vehicles maintained by the Department. The sheet identified each vehicle by the number painted on its side, identifying to the public what role it is playing in the Department’s fleet, rather than the individual (unchanging number) number assigned to the vehicle by its manufacturer. (The Department runs its newest vehicles as cruisers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a vehicle becomes older and more of a maintenance problem, it is relegated to a less intensive use, eventually winding up as an unmarked car.) Although this spreadsheet makes some sense in view of the Department’s program of assigning a vehicle successively to different roles (progressively less intensive use), the spreadsheet is very difficult to use if one wishes to track the maintenance history of a particular vehicle. The Chief indicated that the format of the maintenance records would be changed.

Much of the discussion of the Department's request for a new telephone system was devoted to the issue of how best to obtain and manage a Town-wide system compatible with the new telephone system purchased by the Town Hall Complex Building Committee. Wm. Kevin Looney, Manager of the Building Services Department, participated in this discussion. During the discussion, the point was made that it is important to ensure that the police department telephones are fully compatible with the new Fire Department telephones. Since the new fire stations will not open until the fall, the Police Department request can be processed as part of the 2007 fiscal year budget and need not be dealt with at a Special Town Meeting.

Although the request for funding a feasibility study concerning the Police Station is being made by the Building Services Department, not the Police Department, there was a long discussion of the need for doing something about the deplorable state of the current Police Station. Mr. Looney participated in the discussion. During the discussion, the Committee reviewed the pictures of the current building that had been supplied to the Committee. Chief O'Malley and Lt. Donahue described the current shortcomings of the building and the consequences to the Department of those shortcomings. During the discussion, Mr. Firenze emphasized that any feasibility study should concentrate on minimum acceptable needs. He also spoke of the need for a comprehensive planning. Mrs. Bruschi expressed the view that addressing the Police Station issue might be of more importance to the Town than some of the other issues being addressed by the Capital Project Planning Group (formerly known as the "mega-group") and that a feasibility study with respect to the Police Station might be in order just to get the issue on the Group's agenda. Ms. Fallon asked that a feasibility study include the former Municipal Light Building in case that building (which must be reused or disposed of anyway) offers some elements of solution for the Police Station issues. Chief O'Malley and Lt. Donahue emphasized the importance to the morale of the Department of appropriate facilities. They also emphasized that the current morale of the Department could be enhanced merely by undertaking a study of the need for new facilities.

Building Services

(Item 7 on Committee Agenda)

Wm. Kevin Looney, Manager of the Building Services Department, was present to present his requests. He had participated in the discussion of the Police Department telephone request and the issue of the condition of the current Police Station. During those discussions, in response to a question by Mr. Clark, Mr. Looney had explained that no comprehensive envelope study is needed for Town buildings (as opposed to School Buildings) because all significant Town Buildings are new, are being replaced, had recently been repointed, were scheduled for repointing or were the subject of current budget requests.

As had been the case in previous interviews, Mrs. Bruschi began by asking Mr. Looney about previously appropriated amounts that were unused and might be reappropriated. After some exchange of information, during which Mrs. Bruschi took

notes, Mrs. Brusch and Mr. Looney concluded that they would continue the discussion outside the meeting.

Mr. Looney distributed to the Committee a five-year capital projection chart. The items requested for the first year had priority numbers in the left margin and Mr. Looney used this chart to structure his remaining comments. It was noted that one of the entries (Town Hall auditorium stained glass windows) had no priority designation. Mr. Looney indicated that this item should have the designation "10" and that all higher numbers should be increased by one.

Several of Mr. Looney's requests, including those upon which he puts the highest priority, are classified as "Homer Building Finish work." Mr. Clark, who is a member of the Town Hall Complex Building Committee as well as of this Committee, was called upon to report the status of the Town Hall Complex project, particularly with regard to the completion of the so-called "punch list" and the budget. (See the first footnote on Mr. Looney's chart.) Mr. Clark pointed out that the THCBC has embarked upon settlement discussions with both the contractor and the architect for the Town Hall Complex project. These settlement arrangements have both budget implications and implications for items on Mr. Looney's list of requests. Until settlement arrangements are complete with both the contractor and the architect, the THCBC is not, itself, in a position to know exactly where its budget stands. If the settlement arrangements with the contractor and the architect are completed as proposed by the THCBC and if, as is its current hope, the THCBC is able to address signage, snow guards and the "ponding" on the drive in front of the Town Hall, the THCBC will run over its budget by about \$15,000. Mr. Clark emphasized, however, that this estimate was based on the assumption that the THCBC's position on all items prevails. He mentioned that the architect's claim alone is about \$60,000. He also mentioned that the THCBC had included the auditorium stained glass window work as its first alternative and had not tackled that item only when it appeared that the bids for the basic construction contract left no funding for such an item.

Mrs. Brusch observed that a budgetary overrun on the part of the THCBC would call for a reserve fund transfer. She also observed that most of the items that Mr. Looney had listed under the Homer Building are not appropriate for the Capital Budget because their individual costs are well under \$10,000.

With regard to the item that Mr. Looney considers of second priority, the security control system, Mr. Looney emphasized that he was referring to the "brains" of this system, not the individual devices that would be deployed throughout the buildings. There was a great deal of discussion concerning appropriate security arrangements during which it became apparent that a security system is being installed in the new fire stations as part of the building process. Mrs. Mahoney inquired whether the fire station system could be used as a redundant controller for the entire Town. Mr. Looney is unsure but will research the issue and report back to Mrs. Brusch. Ms. Fallon inquired what the schedule is of the committee that is considering a comprehensive Town approach to the security question. Mr. Looney informed the

Committee that the security committee meets every three weeks because time is needed between meetings for research.

The fire escape on the third floor of the Town Hall would move up in priority if the Homer Building items are dealt with the Operating Budget. The fire escape is a safety issue and the third floor of the Town Hall could be closed if the Fire Department decides that it is inadequate in its present condition.

The Committee turned to the replacement of the slate roof on the Town Hall, a request for which Mr. Looney had given the lowest priority. Mr. Looney explained that he has asked for the funding of this project (\$550,000) over two years (fiscal years 2007 and 2008). This is not a project that need be done on an emergency basis. The Town's consultant for roofs is James Russo. The Committee asked Mr. Looney if information can be provided concerning the need and more precise timing and cost for when that need might arise. The Town Administrator observed that it is unlikely that synthetic slate would be approved for the Town Hall.

Adjournment

(Item 9 on Committee Agenda)

At the conclusion of the Committee's discussion with Mr. Looney, Mrs. Brusch reminded the Committee of its next meeting (March 16) and also provided information concerning the forthcoming (Monday evening, 7:00 p.m., at the Chenery Community Room, March 6, 2006) meeting of the Capital Project Planning Group. At the Committee's last meeting, Mrs. Brusch had indicated that the Monday meeting of the Planning Group would probably be adjourned for a second session on the following Wednesday. She reported that now it appears unlikely that that would happen. She pointed out that the Warrant Committee regularly meets on Wednesday evenings and has much to do during this budget preparation season.

The purpose of Monday night's meeting is to hear reports from design committees for both the Department of Public Works yard and the proposed Wellington elementary school project. (The DPW yard is at the feasibility study stage and the Wellington project is at the schematic design stage.) Presentations of designs should be made to each of the committees that are constituents of the Planning Group (the Board of Selectmen, the Warrant Committee, the Permanent Building Committee and the Capital Budget Committee). A meeting as the Capital Project Planning Group will avoid the necessity of the design committees making four separate presentations of the same material. Mrs. Brusch distributed an agenda for the Capital Planning Group meeting together with materials concerning the feasibility study for the DPW yard and the schematic design proposed for the Wellington project.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and adopted, the meeting adjourned at about 10:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark